

Message Text

SECRET

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ACTION NEA-10

INFO OCT-01 EUR-12 ISO-00 EB-08 SSO-00 NSCE-00 USIE-00
INRE-00 ERDA-05 AID-05 CEA-01 CIAE-00 CIEP-01 COME-00
DODE-00 FEAE-00 FPC-01 H-01 INR-07 INT-05 L-03
NSAE-00 NSC-05 OMB-01 PM-04 OES-06 SP-02 SS-15 STR-04
TRSE-00 ACDA-07 PA-01 PRS-01 NEAE-00 /106 W
-----181751 097718/43

O 181700Z FEB 77
FM AMEMBASSY TUNIS
TO SECSTATE WASHDC NIATC IMMEDIATE 5824
INFO AMEMBASSY AMMAN IMMEDIATE
AMEMBASSY TRIPOLI IMMEDIATE
AMEMBASSY ROME IMMEDIATE
AMEMBASSY RABAT
AMEMBASSY PARIS
AMEMBASSY LONDON
AMEMBASSY ALGIERS
AMEMBASSY CAIRO
AMEMBASSY VALETTA
USCOMSIXTHFLT
CINCUSNAVEUR

S E C R E T SECTION 1 OF 2 TUNIS 1194

AMMAN FOR AMBASSADOR MULCAHY

E.O.11652: GDS
TAGS/ PFOR ENRG TS LY
SUBJECT: TUNISIAN/LIBYAN DISPUTE OVER OFFSHORE DRILLING
OPERATION: STATE OF PLAY FEBRUARY 18

REF: TUNIS 1168 (NOTAL)

1. SUMMARY: TUNISIANS STATE THAT ITALIAN AMBASSADOR
HAS TOLD THEM THAT GOI HAS INFORMED LARG THAT ITALY
WITHDRAWING DRILLING RIG FROM WATERS CLAIMED BY
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TUNISIA AND THAT LIBYANS HAVE THREATENED TO "OPEN
FIRE" IF TUNISIANS DO NOT CEASE "OCCUPYING" DRILLING
PLATFORM. COORDINATES OF DRILLING RIG THAT TUNISIANS
SAY GIVEN THEM BY LIBYANS AND VERIFIED BY GOT WOULD
SEEM TO PLACE DRILLING POINT ON TUNISIAN SIDE OF SHELF
BOUNDARY, ON BASIS OF "ISLAND BASE POINT" CALCULATION MADE BY
GEOGRAPHER'S OFFICEU END SUMMARY.

2. TUNISIAN FOREIGN MINISTRY DIRECTOR FOR EUROPEAN AND AMERICAN AFFAIRS AHMED GHEZAL GAVE CHARGE DETAILED EXPOSITION THIS MORNING OF EVENTS LEADING TO ALLEGED ITALIAN GOVERNMENT DECISION TO WITHDRAW DRILLING RIG WHICH WORKING AT POINT ON CONTINENTAL SHELF CLAIMED BY TUNISIA. TUNISIAN VERSION OF SEQUENCE OF EVENTS AS FOLLOWS:

3. GOT BELIEVES THAT AROUND JAN 13 DRILLING SHIP, SCARABEO FOUR BELONGING TO SUBSIDIARY (AGIP/SAIPEM) OF ITALIAN STATE OIL COMPANY (ENI) POSITIONED OFF TUNISIAN/LIBYAN COAST. ON JAN 18 LIBYAN MINISTRY OF FOREIGN AFFAIRS SENT CIRCULAR NOTE TO ALL DIPLOMATIC MISSIONS IN TRIPOLI -- EXCLUDING TUNISIA -- INFORMING THEM OF DRILLING OPERATION BUT GIVING ERRONEOUS COORDINATES. ON FEB 1 LIBYAN MOFA SENT SECOND NOTE TO DIPLOMATIC MISSIONS TRIPOLI, INCLUDING TUNISIA, "CORRECTING" COORDINATES. NOTE RECEIVED BY TUNISIAN HIGH REPRESENTATIVE TRIPOLI ON FEB 4 AND WAS FIRST KNOWLEDGE GOT HAD OF THIS OPERATION. COORDINATES WERE GIVEN AS 34 DEGREES ONE MINUTE FIVE POINT 54 SECONDS NORTH AND 12 DEGREES 34 MINUTES 13 POINT THIRTY-FOUR SECONDS EAST.

3. ON FEB 8 TUNISIAN MOFA PRESENTED LIBYAN CHARGE TUNIS WITH DIPLOMATIC NOTE (TEXT GIVEN EMBASSY) CONFIRMING RECEIPT OF LIBYAN NOTE AND STATING THAT POSITION OF SCARABEO FOUR INDISPUTABLY ON TUNISIA CONTINENTAL SHELF; THAT DISPATCH OF SHIP BY LIBYAN
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GOVERNMENT TO THIS POINT CONSTITUTED FLAGRANT VIOLATION OF SOVEREIGN RIGHTS OF TUNISIA; THAT GOT STRONGLY PROTESTED THIS ACT AND CATEGORICALLY REJECTED LIBYAN NOTE AS NULL AND VOID. LIBYAN GOVERNMENT ASKED TO WITHDRAW SHIP AND NOT TO UNDERTAKE ANY ACTIVITY THAT WOULD INFRINGE ON TUNISIAN CONTINENTAL SHELF. ACCORDING TO GHEZAL, LIBYAN CHARGE "RETURNED" TUNISIAN NOTE FEB 14.

4. ON FEB 9 TUNISIAN MOFA CALLED IN ITALIAN AMBASSADOR AND "WARNED HIM OF CONSEQUENCES OF ITALIAN ACTION", POINTING OUT THAT LOCATION OF DRILLING VESSEL WITHIN AREA OF TUNISIAN CONCESSION TO SEPEG IN WHICH AGIP HAS INTEREST (ACCORDING TO EMBASSY INFORMATION 20 PERCENT). THEREFORE ITALIANS DRILLING IN TUNISIAN CONCESSION WHICH INCLUDED THEM AS WELL AS FRENCH, BUT ON BASIS OVERLAPPING CONCESSION GRANTED AGIP BY LIBYA.

5. ON FEB 11 DIRECTOR OF ENERGY FOR TUNISIAN MINISTRY OF NATIONAL ECONOMY REQUESTED TUNISIAN COAST GUARD

TO VERIFY COORDINATES. COAST GUARD PATROL BOAT DID
SO AND REPORTED APPROXIMATELY SAME COORDINATES AS
LIYBAN NOTE (34 DEGREES ONE POINT ONE MINUTE NORTH AND
12 DEGREES 34 POINT TWO MINUTES EAST?). DIRECTOR OF
ENERGY PREPARED SUMMONS ON FEB 17 (TEXT GIVEN EMBASSY)
INFORMING CAPTAIN OTLTTRABEO FOUR THAT HE HAD VIOLATED
TUNISIAN CONTINENTAL SHELF AND THAT HE MUST CEASE
OPERATIONS AND IMMEDIATELY LEAVE THE AREA OR BE
SUBJECT TO PENALTIES OF TUNISIAN LAW. SUMMONS DELIVERED
TO SCARABEO FOUR FEB 17 BY TUNISIAN COAST GUARD BOAT.

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TRSE-00 ACDA-07 PA-01 PRS-01 NEAE-00 /106 W
-----181752 097832 /43

O 181700Z FEB 77

FM AMEMBASSY TUNIS

TO SECSTATE WASHDC NIACT IMMEDIATE 5825

INFO AMEMBASSY AMMAN IMMEDIATE

AMEMBASSY TRIPOLI IMMEDIATE

AMEMBASSY ROME IMMEDIATE

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AMEMBASSY VALLETTA

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6. ALSO ON FEB 17 ITALIAN AMBASSADOR IN TUNIS INFORMED
TUNISIAN MOFA THAT SCARABEO WOULD LEAVE AREA WITHIN
FOUR DAYS, TIME REQUIRED TO CAP DRILL HOLE. MOFA
ASKED FOR WRITTEN CONFIRMATION OF THIS FROM GOI AS
WELL AS WRITTEN CONFIRMATION FROM ENI THAT OPERATION
BEING ABANDONED. LATER IN DAFUX FEB 17, LIYBAN PRIME
MINISTER JALLUD CALLED IN TUNISIAN HIGH REPRESENTATIVE

TRIPOLI AND INFORMED HIM THAT IF "TUNISIAN OCCUPATION"
OF DRILLING RIG DID NOT CEASE, LIBYAN FORCES WOULD
"OPEN FIRE". TUNISIA, OF COURSE, IN NO WAY "OCCUPYING"
RIG.

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7. MORNING OF FEB 18 ITALIAN AMBASSADOR INFORMED
TUNISIAN MOFA THAT GOI HAD TOLD LIBYANS THAT THEY
WERE WITHDRAWING SCARABEO AND THAT HE WOULD CONFIRM
ITALIAN DECISION TO GOT BY NOTE EITHER TODAY OR
TOMORROW, FEB 19. (WE KNOW THAT ITALIAN AMBASSADOR
DID CALL ON GHEZAL THIS MORNING, AS DID LATER ON
IN MORNING, FRENCH CHARGE.) IN RESPONSE TO QUESTION,
GHEZAL SAID HE DID NOT KNOW WHETHER ANY TUNISIAN NAVY
VESSELS NOW IN IMMEDIATE AREA OF DRILLING OPERATION
BUT HE DID BELIEVE TUNISIAN "WARSHIP" HAD BEEN IN
AREA AT TIME SUMMONS DELIVERED (THUS DISTINGUISHING
TUNISIAN COAST GUARD FROM TUNISIAN NAVY PROPER).

8. ASIDE FROM INFORMATION SUPPLIED BY GHEZAL, EMBASSY
OFFICER INFORMED BY GOT MINISTRY OF INTERIOR OFFICIAL
THAT LIBYAN MINISTER OF INTERIOR ARRIVING TUNIS
TONIGHT (FEB 18) FROM MADRID WITH TWO OTHER SENIOR
LIBYAN OFFICIALS. PURPOSE OF VISIT UNKNOWN.

9. COMMENT: HEZAL ASKED NOTHING FROM USG, ALTHOUGH
HE HINTED BROADLY THAT GOT WOULD BE INTERESTED IN
ANY INFORMATION USG GAINED ON GOI INTENTIONS. HE
MADE IT CLEAR THAT GOT NOT ENTIRELY CONVINCED ITALIANS
WOULD KEEP STRICTLY TO THEIR WORD ON WITHDRAWAL
OF DRILLING VESSEL. FOLLOWING MEETING WITH GHEZAL,
WE HAVE REVIEWED INR STUDY OF LIBYA/TUNISIA CONTINENTAL
SHELF BOUNDARY (RGES-7 OF 21 DEC 72) AND ATTACHED
MAP AS MODIFIED BY STATE 212136 OF 26 AUG 76, AND
IT WOULD APPEAR THAT COORDINATES GIVEN US BY TUNISIANS
FALL ON TUNISIAN SIDE OF LINE ACCORDING TO GEOGRAPHER'S
CALCULATIONS THAT USES ISLANDS AS BASE POINTS.
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Message Attributes

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Disposition Date: 22 May 2009
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Disposition Remarks:
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